

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

You recently set a long-awaited goal for broadband deployment - to have universal, affordable access to broadband technology by the year 2007. We agree with the need to make broadband a priority since the technology can add \$300 billion a year to the U.S. economy and generate more than 1.2 million jobs.

However, simply stating a goal is not enough. Without aggressive and concrete action, we are concerned that the goal will not be met.

Unfortunately, the record of your Administration thus far has not embraced even modest steps to promote broadband usage and access. For example, while Congress has provided over \$2 billion in loan authority for rural broadband loans by the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), RUS has only distributed about \$132 million in funding. Over \$1 billion in loan requests sit pending at RUS, yet rather than looking for ways to streamline processing, RUS has created hurdles in the loan application process.

In addition, your 2002-2005 Administration budgets have consistently proposed eliminating the Community Technology Centers program, which helps local groups build computer labs for after-school and adult education programs. Your budgets have also consistently proposed eliminating the Technology Opportunities Program, another program that helps promote innovative local uses of the capabilities broadband can offer.

The Administration has not only undermined these existing programs, it has not offered any positive alternatives. For example, we have supported tax credits for broadband deployment, as Senator Rockefeller has been proposing for several years, but you have not included any comparable proposal in any of your budgets or tax cut packages. Nor have you exercised vocal leadership on regulatory, tax, or other issues relating to broadband. Our competitors are making critical investments in broadband deployment, and the United States has slipped to 11th in the world in broadband use.

Unless the United States responds in kind, our standing as a technology leader will be threatened and an opportunity to create more than a million new, well-paying jobs will be lost.

We stand ready to work with your Administration on this important issue. But to reach the goal you have set, we need to start immediately with a detailed proposal.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Bob Baker

Tom Kachle

Tom F. Kenny

Edward W. Kennedy

Chris Dodd

Jim Jeffords

Murphy D. Feingold

Martha Cantor

John Johnson

Tom Wyden

Harry Reid

Petrick Leahy

Patty Murray

Tom Harkin

Doc Dure

Byron D. Dorgan

J. Biden

Charles Schumer

Em Bayh

Jeff Hollings
